

Celebrating the Life of
Antonia Pantoja



September 13, 1921 - May 24, 2002

Saturday, June 22, 2002
10:00 A.M.

The Riverside Church
New York City

Obituary

Dr. Antonia Pantoja, who received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Bill Clinton in 1996 for her efforts to provide educational and economic opportunities for Puerto Ricans, was born in San Juan, P.R., in 1921. She attended the University of Puerto Rico, where she earned a teaching certificate in 1942. She taught in a rural school for two years. As a member of the first wave of impoverished emigrants from the island, she moved to New York City. She won a scholarship to Hunter College, graduating with a bachelor's in sociology in 1952. She earned a master's degree from Columbia University's New York School of Social Work in 1954. Upon graduation, Dr. Pantoja focused her attention on the grinding poverty of Puerto Ricans in New York.

To begin addressing these problems, Dr. Pantoja founded the Puerto Rican Forum in 1957 to serve as an incubator for organizations and programs promoting economic self-sufficiency. The nonprofit organization is now known as the National Puerto Rican Forum. In 1961, Dr. Pantoja established Aspira, a nonprofit organization encouraging educational attainment, self-esteem, cultural awareness and leadership development.

She attended the New York constitutional convention in Albany in 1967, where she pressed for the state to assume constitutional responsibility for free higher education, adult education and "compensatory education" for the disadvantaged.

In 1970, she established the Puerto Rican Research and Resource Center and Universidad Boricua in Washington D.C., becoming its chancellor in 1973, the same year that she earned a Ph.D. from Union Graduate School in Ohio. She joined the faculty of San Diego State University's School of Social Work in 1978, and later founded the Graduate School for Community Development.

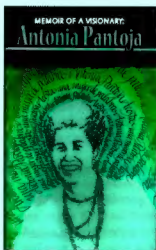
After 1984, Dr. Pantoja devoted much of her time to work in Puerto Rico, establishing Productir, an organization that provides economic assistance to small businesses in poor rural areas, and Provienda, which works to develop housing, and lastly she organized a community trust, Prodeco.

She is survived by her partner, Dr. Wilhelmina Petty; her brother, Esteban Lopez; her sister, Haydee Lopez and nieces and nephews.

Order of Service

Organ Selection	Dr. Timothy Smith, Director of Music and Organist
Call to Worship	Rev. Fanny Erickson
Welcoming Words	Ms. Lillian Jiménez, Latino Educational Media Center
"In Her Own Words"	A short video presentation prepared by the Latino Educational Media Center for presentation at the reading of Memoirs of a Visionary: Dr. Antonia Pantoja
Musical Selection	Ms. Makea McDonald
Reflections	Mr. Luis R. Gonzalez Argueso, Johnson and Johnson
Poems by Dr. A. Pantoja	Ms. Deborah Maher
Scriptures	Rev. Fanny Erickson
Musical Selection	Mr. Juan Jose Ibarra
Remembrances	Selected Remarks
Prayer and Benediction	Rev. Fanny Erickson
Postlude	

Reception will follow the service



"Many people have called me a visionary. I never liked this characterization because I considered my ideas and projects practical answers to the resolution of problems. Now, I accept that I am a visionary. If being a visionary means that I have tried to transform reality."

Dr. Antonia Pantoja